

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 058628

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PEPR, KS, IS

SUBJECT: KOREAN REACTION TO ISRAELI CLOSURE OF EMBASSY
IN SEOUL -

REF: SEOUL 1359

1. MOFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, YU CHONG-HA, DURING MARCH 6 CALL ON KOREA DESK ASKED IF DEPARTMENT SAW ANY POLITICAL INGREDIENT IN ISRAEL'S PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION TO CLOSE EMBASSY IN SEOUL. YU SAID THAT THE ROKG HAD NOT BEEN NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OF THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, AND THAT KOREAN OFFICIALS WERE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN IT, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS THE ISRAELI EMBASSY HAD ACHIEVED IN GENERATING KOREAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI POSITIONS.
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YU SAID THAT THE ROKG WAS ALSO CONCERNED THAT THE EMBASSY'S CLOSING WOULD ALSO ADVERSELY AFFECT U.S. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR KOREA.

2. KOREA COUNTRY DIRECTOR TOLD YU THAT WE WERE EQUALLY MYSTIFIED BY THE CLOSURE MOVE AND HAD FIRST LEARNED OF IT FROM PRESS REPORTS OUT OF SEOUL. IN DEPARTMENT'S VIEW,

THE DECISION TO CLOSE THE EMBASSY WAS TAKEN PRIMARILY ON BUDGETARY GROUNDS ALTHOUGH ABSENCE OF RECIPROCAL ROKG

ROKG MISSION IN ISRAEL OBVIOUSLY MADE DECISION EASIER. WE DID NOT SEE ANY POTENTIAL HARM TO U.S.-ROK RELATIONS FROM THE CLOSURE.

3. YU SAID THAT ROKG WAS STILL INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, BUT NOT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO HARM RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES ON WHICH KOREA DEPENDS FOR ENERGY SUPPLY AND OVERSEAS MARKETS. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY SUGGESTIONS DEPARTMENT MIGHT HAVE.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER RAISED ISSUE WITH THE SECRETARY ALONG SIMILAR LINES IN THEIR MARCH 6 MEETING.

5. DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO EXAMINE THE QUESTION OF ROK-ISRAEL RELATIONS, AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH ACTION ADDRESSEES MAY HAVE ON THE ISSUE. VANCE

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